MY QUEEN

A WEEKLY JOURNAL FOR YOUNG WOMEN

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MARION MARLOWE'S CHRISTMAS EVE

OR

THE TREACHERY OF A FACTORY INSPECTOR

BY GRACE SHIRLEY

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MARION MARLOWE'S CHRISTMAS EVE;

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By GRACE SHIRLEY.

CHAPTER I.

A NOBLE MISSION.

Just as a church clock tolled the hour of eight on a clear winter morning, a young girl, radiant with health and beauty, tripped lightly down the steps of a magnificent mansion on Fifth avenue.

Although nearly a week before Christmas the holiday spirit was in the air, and a smile of health and happiness lit up the girl's face as she walked briskly along. Suddenly she heard a voice calling to her and she turned her head quickly to see who it was.

"Good-morning, Miss Marlowe. What an early bird you are! Whoever would have expected to meet you at this hour of the morning!"

A top Stanhope, such as physicians use, had been drawn up to the curb, and, as the young girl looked around quickly, she recognized Dr. Reginald Brookes, one of her oldest and dearest friends in the city.

"Oh, Dr. Brookes, I am so glad to see you! But how tired you look! Is some patient very ill, that you are so pale and worried?" she asked, quickly.

Dr. Brookes gave an order to his colored driver and sprang out of the carriage as he spoke:

"Drive home, John. I will walk—that is, if I may have your company a part of the way, Miss Marlowe."

"I shall be delighted," said Marion Marlowe, honestly; "for I have such lots of things that I wish to tell you."

"And I, too, have so many questions to ask," laughed the doctor, as the carriage rolled away. "Really, Marion, I've been dying to see you ever since your advent into society."

A rippling laugh followed the handsome young doctor's remark, and then the young girl grew sober in a minute.

"I have learned a few little things since that particular occurrence," she began, rather sorrowfully; "one is, that I have a dear, good friend in Mrs. Stetson, the society leader, who has taken such an extraordinary interest in me, and another is, that I am not loved so dearly by the rest of the inmates of the charmed circle."

"Because of the Duke of Lorton's preference for your society," broke in the doctor, laughingly. "Oh, I heard all about your having refused his Grace. Our friends, Bert Jackson and Miss Ailyn, kept me pretty well posted."

"Then, there is nothing for me to tell," said Marion, gayly; "but, in a nutshell, my aversion to society was only equaled by society's aversion to me. We don't seem to agree in the majority of our opinions, and so, although I still remain a guest under Mrs. Stetson's roof, I have decided that I can employ my time better during the season than by attending balls, receptions and teas, and I am casting about, as the saying is, for a field of labor in which I can be particularly useful."

As she spoke the young man was gazing at her with open admiration. It did not surprise him in the least to hear her express such sentiments.

Marion Marlowe had come to the city a poor country girl, but, since her arrival, she had never been idle a minute—her hands and wits both had been constantly busy for the welfare of herself and others.

"But, really, you need rest, Marion," he began, with a look of anxiety; "after so long a time on the stage in a very difficult rôle, you are certainly entitled to a few weeks' vacation."

"I would stagnate in that time," said the fair girl, merrily. "No, I must work, doctor, and I must be useful to others. Now, if you are my good, true friend, you will point out where I can add my mite to the comfort of humanity at the same time that I am enjoying the luxury of Mrs. Stetson's beautiful mansion."

"What! Are you going to stay there all winter?" asked the doctor, quickly.

"While she is abroad, yes," was Marion's answer. "You see, she wants the house kept open, and I am to look after the servants."

After the death of Lord Curry, a young English nobleman, who had died at Mrs. Stetson's house while Marion was a guest there, the brilliant society leader had sprung one of her frequent surprises on the social set by suddenly resolving to go abroad. Although Marion had been asked to accompany her, she had refused, because she felt she was already under sufficient obligations to Mrs. Stetson for her kindness to her in introducing her into society.

So it had been arranged that Marion should stay at the house in New York while Mrs. Stetson took a few weeks' trip to the Mediterranean.

"Well, most girls would find plenty to entertain them in that beautiful home," began the doctor, mischievously; "but here you are, Marion, on the lookout for a labor of love, as usual."

The beautiful girl turned around squarely and gave him a searching glance.

"What makes you look so worn out, Dr. Brookes? Have you been spending two or three hours with a rich and pettish patient or have you been on some wearisome errand of mercy?" The handsome physician's face flushed, and his eyes drooped as he answered, gravely:

"I spent last night in a room on the top floor of a tenement house in East Broadway, trying to keep a flicker of life in the

body of a poor little chap who has small reason, I'll admit, to thank me for having succeeded."

"Then you think——"

"I think it would have been better for him if I had not possessed the skill to save his life," said the doctor, sadly. "Why, Marion, you have no idea of the misery and woe in some parts of this great, overcrowded city."

"And you are spending your time in such places?" said the young girl. "You are giving a share of your time and talents to these poor creatures!"

The physician said nothing, only blushed a little deeper.

"It is noble of you!" exclaimed Marion, in open admiration; "but tell me, please, why cannot I help you?"

"I would not wish you to help me in such work," said her friend, quickly. "You are too pure, too sweet; you should not come in contact with such wretchedness!"

It was the young girl's turn to blush, but she answered firmly: "That is mere sentiment, doctor; no one is too pure or too good to be useful to their fellows. Here I am, with time to spare at present, and I shall not be happy until I am doing something."

"But, Marion, you must think of the future," urged her companion. "You are an actress now, you are to be a singer later. Your beauty and talents must not be neglected."

"Please leave my wonderful attributes out of the question," said the young girl, laughing. "I am nothing more nor less than a healthy young woman, with a fairly active conscience. I must guide my actions according to my conscience, and to be merely ornamental is not at all congenial. Now, tell me," she added, sweetly; "why can I not help you with your charity work? I am young, healthy and strong, and I would be glad, indeed, to aid in so noble a labor."

Her beautiful eyes flashed with soft fire as she spoke, and the splendid tones of her voice rang with a pleading cadence.

"Well, if you insist, Marion, I suppose I must let you," said the doctor, laughing; "but I can think of but one way in which we can work together."

"Tell me quickly—what is it? Oh, I am so glad there is a way! It will be such a positive delight to feel that I am useful!"

CHAPTER II.

A GLIMPSE OF THE "SWEAT SHOPS."

A few hours later Marion Marlowe was seated in a dingy office of a still dingier building, which was hemmed in on all sides by tenement houses.

She had ridden down-town in the doctor's carriage, but left it a few blocks away at his suggestion. He was afraid of being considered a "swell mug" by his ignorant patients, and such a reputation as that would greatly curtail his usefulness.

As the doctor and Marion had entered the office, a middle-aged man arose to greet them, and the two gentlemen shook hands in the most cordial manner.

"Miss Marlowe is anxious to make herself useful to our poor people, Mr. Landale," the doctor explained, after he had introduced his companion.

"I'm afraid we haven't much that is fit for her to do," were the gentleman's first words, as he glanced sharply at Marion.

"I think you may trust me to do anything at all," replied the young girl, quickly. "It is true that I am inexperienced, but I can learn very quickly."

"My plan was this," spoke up Dr. Brookes, at once. "Of course, Miss Marlowe could not be a regular Government Factory Inspector without going through a lot of red tape with the Civil Service laws, but I thought she might accompany a regular in-

spector, and, by keeping her eyes and ears open, help to root out a good many evils."

"You would have to visit all sorts of vile places," said the man, glancing at Marion. "You would have to meet with ignorant, vicious persons, who are grinding the very blood out of the bodies of their human slaves, and your whole work would consist of ferreting out evil."

"It is awful, yet it is interesting," said Marion, soberly; "but if these evils exist, why should I fear to face them?"

"You would have to watch for overcrowding in workshops and living rooms—see that children under the legal age were not employed at machines, and, above all, keep an eye out for the sick and suffering, for fear that they may be spreading contagion among us."

The fair young girl did not flinch at this dreadful picture, but her cheeks flushed a little redder, and her eyes flashed, as she answered:

"I'll do it!" she exclaimed; "and, oh, if I could only multiply myself into a dozen! What a pity that so many men and women shut their eyes to these things and fritter away their lives as butterflies of society!"

A few instructions followed the young girl's decision, and then, with Mr. Landale and Dr. Brookes as escorts, the three made a tour of the building.

As they climbed the stairs up to the sixth story, Marion noticed a continual whirring of sewing machines, and in the hallways they squeezed past many pale-faced young girls, whose [illegible] were filled up with pieces of [illegible]

"This building is occupied almost entirely by sweltie contractors," said Mr. Landale; "and it is one of the best places in the city. The firm on this floor treats its employees far better than the average."

"Why don't they open the doors and windows? The place is stifling," gasped Marion.

"Why, the wind might blow their silks about, and minutes are precious here," said the man, laughing; "no time to be chasing refractory goods. Time is much more valuable than human comfort."

"Why, the window panes are all painted," whispered Marion again.

"So the employees won't look out," explained the doctor, dryly. "It's as the Superintendent of Inspectors says—'time only is valuable.'"

A few minutes later the tour was completed, and Marion was glad to rest in the superintendent's office.

As they sat and talked two people came in. One was a shrewd-faced office boy, and the other was a woman.

"One of our inspectors," said Mr. Landale, calling the woman up to them.

An introduction followed, and then a few words of explanation.

"Miss Marlowe wishes to help us," he said in a kindly way; "but she does not care to bother with the Civil Service. Of course, she will not interfere with the regular work, for in reality she is acting as Dr. Brookes' assistant, and merely intends to look out for the suffering ones and supply them with a physician's care, if they need it."

The woman, whom he introduced as Miss French, looked Marion over keenly, but her greeting was apparently kind and cordial.

"She can accompany me on my regular trips at any time," she said, coldly; "but I fancy the work will not be much to her liking."

"It will not be a picnic, as the boys say," laughed Mr. Landale; "still, Miss Marlowe seems determined to make herself useful."

"I am, indeed," said Marion, with a serious smile, "and I quite envy Miss French her opportunity to do good. It must be lovely

to be armed with a Government certificate and to be able to enforce the laws when they are broken."

A curious smile crossed the superintendent's face, but Miss French only glanced at him and answered, sweetly:

"It is very satisfactory, of course, Miss Marlowe. Still, the work is unpleasant, and very dangerous. A woman takes her life in her hands when she goes into some places."

The young girl shivered a little, but she was not dismayed.

"I shall make my first visit to-morrow, if you will allow me?" she said, looking pleasantly at Miss French.

"I start at nine o'clock in the morning," was the answer. "Will you not find it irksome to be out so early?"

"I will meet you here or wherever you say at that hour or earlier," was Marion's prompt answer.

"Come here then, please," said Miss French, politely.

A few moments later the interview ended, and another thrilling episode in this brave girl's life was about to take place.

CHAPTER III.

A DAY IN THE HARNESS.

The next morning Marion was out even earlier than usual, and hastened to Mr. Landale's office, where she was pleasantly greeted.

"Here is a list of the places that I would like you to visit to-day," said Mr. Landale, as he handed Miss French a scrap of paper.

"I shall be so glad of your company and experience," said Marion to the woman. "I am sure that it will help me a great deal, and I am anxious to learn all I can of your people."

"Come back about noon and let me know how you get along," said Mr. Landale. "Perhaps if I hear from you rather frequently at first I may be able to show you where you can work to best advantage."

"Seems to be anxious to have you around, doesn't he?" said Miss French, as soon as the door closed behind them. "Landale doesn't usually take to the girls like that! He must be 'stuck on you,' to use a common expression."

Marion opened her beautiful eyes wide in astonishment at her companion's remark, but immediately determined to pay as little attention to it as possible.

"He knows that I have never done anything of this sort, and no doubt is afraid of my making mistakes," she said, simply.

As the two young women walked on down the street, Marion was distressed by the miserable aspect of this part of the city.

It seemed to be the very centre of toil and poverty. The streets were full of men, women and children, all of them poorly clad, and many actually shivering in tatters.

Women in slatternly gowns stood gossiping in the dingy doorways of tenement houses, while hordes of ill-clad children romped in the dirt of the gutters.

From the windows of nearly every house came the whirring, clicketty-click of sewing machines, while men and boys trundled push-carts through the streets laden with partly-finished garments.

Cramped little pawnshops displayed their unclaimed pledges behind dirty windows, and gave mute evidence of the fact that the residents of this quarter had been forced to abandon even the small possessions they had owned.

On it all shone the sun, with its bright glare, as if it would search out all the misery of the spot and reveal it without pity.

"We'll go in here," said the inspector, suddenly, as she turned into a doorway and began to climb the rickety stairs of a gloomy tenement. At the head of the first flight she

opened a door unceremoniously, and Marion stepped inside of a large room, which occupied the entire floor.

This room was full of sewing machines arranged close together, and over each bent a girl or woman, whose eyes were intently fixed upon her work.

Marion noticed that not one of them looked up as they entered, nor showed an interest in anything but the garment she was stitching.

"It is from this sort of place that the dry goods stores get their stuff for their 'special sales,'" said Miss French, sarcastically.

"I don't believe they would buy them if they knew what flesh and blood was being worked into them with every stitch," replied the young girl, sadly.

"Oh, I doubt if it would make any difference!" was the answer. "Who cares how they are made, so long as they get them?"

The proprietor came forward just then, and asked their business.

Miss French showed her badge, and the man shrugged his broad shoulders contemptuously.

He was a short, stout German, with a beer-tainted breath, and was clad in the dirtiest garments that Marion had ever seen.

"How old is that operator?" asked Miss French, pointing to a pale-faced girl, who looked scarcely older than a child of seven.

"How der teufel do I know dot?" asked the man, surlily; "she olt enough to vork! Vat more I ask? She turn out more as eight tozen a day for me!"

Marion glided rapidly across the room and stood beside the child for a minute.

"You are a clever operator," she said, softly. "I see you know how to handle a machine. Do you like the work, dearie?"

The girl looked up in surprise at such gentle words, and then, without a second's pause, bent over her work again.

"No, miss, I don't like it," she said, with a sigh; "but it's all I know how to do, and beggars can't be choosers."

The tears sprang to Marion's eyes at the bitter words. This child had already learned the world's lesson of misery.

"I'm sorry you have to work," she said, very tenderly. "You should be out in the country somewhere, or else at school; then you would have some time to yourself, and could get strong and rosy."

The girl sighed again, and a dull look spread over her weazened face.

"I did want to stay to school till I was ten," she said, shortly; "but I couldn't—I'd a starved! It was work or nothin'."

"Then you are not thirteen yet?" asked Marion, quickly.

The child gave her a quick look, but Marion's smile disarmed her suspicions.

"Nowheres near it! I'm eleven," was the stolid answer.

"Never mind, perhaps you'll not always have to work so hard," said Marion, quickly; then she stepped back to where Miss French and the man were still standing.

"She is not yet twelve," she said, in a whisper.

She waited a moment, expecting to hear the inspector give an order, but, much to her surprise, the woman merely shrugged her shoulders.

"Shouldn't she be taken off?" she asked, timidly, after waiting a few minutes.

"Mein Gott! Nein! nein!" cried the man, throwing up both of his dirty hands. "Der best vork womans I hab in der place!"

Miss French turned toward him and muttered some words in German.

Marion did not catch them, but she saw a cunning look creep into the man's eyes.

There was just a glance between them, and then Miss French spoke:

"She will be laid off to-night, Miss Mar-

lowe, and paid in full. This man has promised, and that is all we can expect of him."

Marion drew a sigh of relief, but her brow was still thoughtful. She was the possessor of more than ordinarily clever intuitions, and there was something in this woman's manner that she could not account for.

When they had made their way to the street again, Miss French turned and looked at her angrily.

"Don't forget that you have nothing to do with the taking off of help, Miss Marlowe!" she said, coldly; "that is my business, as I am an authorized inspector. You look out for the sick folks and doctor them all you please. You'll get yourself disliked if you go to bossing the contractors."

Marion did not answer except with a glance, but a curious suspicion entered her mind at once.

Almost involuntarily she glanced up at the number of the building, and as soon as she had an opportunity she jotted it down in a little note-book that she carried.

"There's something strange about all this," was her quiet thought. "I'll make it a point to see whether that child was really taken off. If she wasn't, I'll report it just as sure as I live!"

CHAPTER IV.

A FEW SUSPICIONS.

Marion was almost ill from weariness and the sight of so much misery when she again ascended the stairs to Mr. Landale's office.

She had visited eight of these "sweat shops" in all, climbing from four to seven pairs of stairs in every building.

Mr. Landale was waiting for them when they returned, and Marion listened intently while Miss French reported the day's proceedings. The episode of the child operator had not been the only peculiar incident that the young girl had noted, for, on several occasions, it seemed to her that Miss French showed almost criminal leniency, while in other places she was unnecessarily severe, and really made the proprietors a great deal of trouble.

She had seen and wondered at the varied treatment which the inspector had received, for, while some of the swarthy slave-drivers fairly cursed her in their native tongues, others almost groveled at her feet, as though begging for her favor.

But Marion had decided to watch and wait. Her information would be far more valuable when she had corroborated all her suspicions.

She had not intended to spy upon Miss French, but these things had been forced upon her, to some extent, although she could thank her sharp eyes and wits for seeing and understanding.

At present she was acting solely as aide to Dr. Brookes, and her note-book was full of the names and addresses of ailing women.

This was supposed to be the end of her responsibility, but Marion was not the girl to close her eyes to her moral obligations, and she was always enlisted upon the side of humanity.

The gratitude or ingratitude of human beings was nothing to her when she compared it with the duty which she owed to herself—that of righting every wrong which came within her power, and removing, as far as possible, the burdens of the innocent.

"Is it beginning to frighten you yet?" asked Mr. Landale, smilingly. "Does the sight of so much misery make you feel like running away, particularly when you realize that it is beyond the bounds of possibility to relieve it?"

"Oh! but I am sure I can relieve a little of it," said Marion, stoutly; "and, even if it is only one poor creature's life that is made brighter by my efforts, I shall not regret the undertaking."

"What impresses you the most?" asked the man, very earnestly. "What have you seen to-day that seems to you to be the greatest evil?"

Miss French glanced at her sharply, and her cheeks flushed a little. She was decidedly uneasy, but Marion did not falter in her answer.

"The child labor," she said, quickly. "Oh, Mr. Landale, that is pitiful! Little children who should be in the nursery or in school are working like slaves in those human beehives!"

"And yet the law is trying to do what it can," was the answer, "although, in my opinion, it has begun at the wrong end of the problem. However, these are the cases we are anxious to learn of first, although, in many instances, it seems a crime to take them off, for the poor mites have neither mothers nor fathers, in the true sense of the words—they are the offspring of brutes, who will not support them!"

"Then why does not the law attend to that?" cried Marion, hotly. "Why does it permit a man or woman to spend one day of idleness when there are such hordes of children to be supported?"

The man shrugged his shoulders and a sneer crossed his face.

"Some one should force these parents to support their own children," continued Marion, impetuously, "and send them to school and keep them clean and healthy. Oh, I wish I were powerful enough to make them do it!"

"The one who is powerful enough does not seem to care," broke in Miss French, quickly. "And if their Creator does not bother about the little wretches, why in the world should we distress ourselves about their condition?"

"They may be the tests for our humanity," said Marion, thoughtfully. "It seems to me there must be some reason for it all, but I confess I do not know what it is."

"No, nor any of us," cried Miss French; "and we are fools to bother about it! I just go ahead and obey my orders, but if I were to take the burdens of misery upon my shoulders, I wouldn't last a week in my present business."

"That is right," said Mr. Landale. "Pity and compassion are all right enough, but one would soon be consumed by his own feelings if he gave way to these emotions."

"No doubt you are right," said Marion, sadly, "but my blood has just been boiling all day! I am afraid I shall never be calm in the midst of such conditions. Why, just think," she went on, with her gray eyes shining: "there are children in those shops who hardly know a mother's love! There are young women who are hungry and starving for affection, and for those other pleasures so necessary to the youthful nature! What can these poor creatures know of the blessedness of existence? Of the grandeur of ambition, or the sweet holiness of marriage? Why, they seem like stunted creatures, animals in the likeness of men and women! No, I shall never be able to look at them and hide my emotions! I cannot even think of them without a shudder of horror!"

"Then you had better give up before you grow gray-headed," said Miss French, who had listened calmly to her outburst. "You are altogether too sentimental to engage in this business!"

"You are mistaken," said Marion, more calmly. "My sympathy for the poor creatures will not prevent my being of assistance to them. I can control my feelings, even though I cannot annihilate them."

"Still, the effect will be dangerous! You had better give it up in time," repeated Miss French, sneeringly.

"Not until I am obliged to!" said the young girl, firmly. "I have seen some evils to-day that must be corrected, and I shall

stick to my work until I have accomplished a little, at least, in that direction."

She looked straight at Miss French as she spoke, and the woman's face flushed crimson.

It was the first intimation that she had received that the young girl had been watching her, and, even now, she was uncertain whether or not she was mistaken in the glance—it might be that it was only her guilty conscience accusing her.

"What evil in particular do you refer to, miss?" asked the woman, sharply, trying, at the same time, to show thorough indifference to the subject.

Marion's full lips curved in a peculiar smile.

"Excuse me from answering your question," she said, quietly. "You might be tempted to remind me again that I was not a regular inspector—so I shall make my report to Dr. Brookes only."

Mr. Landale glanced from one to the other, and Miss French bit her lips with great vexation.

It was time for Marion to go, and she knew it. Another minute would bring an outburst from the woman.

With a pleasant smile, she bade them both good-afternoon, but, just as she reached the door, Miss French snapped out at her:

"There are lots of things that you don't understand in this business, Miss Marlowe ——"

"Oh, but I am learning," laughed the young girl, breaking her off very suddenly. "And why should I not learn, my dear Miss French? Why, another day in your company and I shall be almost ready to graduate."

She closed the door with a merry laugh, leaving Mr. Landale staring and Miss French purple with anger.

"Now she'll try to influence him against me," she whispered to herself. "I suppose I was very foolish to make an enemy of her."

CHAPTER V.

AN INSULT RESENTED.

After Marion left Mr. Landale's office she walked slowly along the narrow streets, her whole frame trembling from excitement and weariness.

It had been a dreadful day, and after her past few weeks of gayety and idleness the contrast appeared to her even more striking and cruel.

In the country whence she came no such absolute slavery existed, nor was there ever to be found quite such an extreme of poverty.

Of course, a life on the farm or in the farmhouse kitchen was one of drudgery and monotony, but it was infinitely better than what she had just seen, for there were snow-covered fields and pure air and sunlight, while these poor wretches in the sweat shops saw nothing of these beauties.

"Oh, if only the rich would come down here!" she sighed, as she stood on a street corner and gazed upon the squalor about her.

Then she tried to think of some way in which she could interest her wealthy acquaintances in this work, but at every point in her thoughts she was confronted by obstacles.

The squalor and misery upon which she looked so fearlessly would shock such young women as Maude Rushlyn and Kittie Glenham, two society girls she knew; and as for the matrons whom she had met, they would scoff at the idea—they preferred to limit their charities to donations to rich churches or an afternoon at some fasionable "sewing bee," where they could listen to an expensive orchestra and sip tea or chocolate.

"Of course, Miss Allyn would help me, or Bert Jackson," sighed Marion aloud, as she thought of her two best friends in the city. "They are both glad and ready to aid in all good works, but just now dear Alma is out of town, while Bert is traveling with his adopted father. No; it is left for Dr.

Brookes and myself to do what we can! We must not dream of waiting for others to help us!"

There was a rare smile on her lips as she thought of Dr. Brookes, and her heart beat a little faster as she thought of her longing to labor beside him.

"He is so noble, so good, and, oh, so patient!" she mused.

The sweet girl's eyes dimmed with tears as she remembered his love for her.

As she walked on, thinking deeply, she glanced up now and then at the lamp-posts, for the narrow, crooked streets were very confusing.

Suddenly a group of women emerged from a doorway just behind her. They were all much excited, and one of their number was weeping bitterly.

"My poor girl, what is the matter?" asked Marion, kindly, as she turned and joined them, her beautiful face glowing with sympathy.

"They've closed up, and they've got our money!" sobbed the girl, in agony. "It was every cent I had! Oh, it is wicked, wicked!"

"I don't understand," said Marion, in perplexity. "Who has your money? Can't you explain it, dear? It is possible that I may be able to help you."

The girl gave her a sharp look, and as her glance fell on Marion's really expensive garments she seemed to brighten up in a wonderful manner.

Unaccustomed to burdening those who were worse off than herself with her troubles, she was glad of an opportunity of unbosoming her woe to one who did not look overwhelmed by care, but who gave her the impression of being beyond the reach of trouble.

"Why, Solomons, the clothing man, has got it!" was her quick answer. "You see, it is this way, miss: They made us give them a deposit of six dollars on every dozen pairs of pants we took home to make. That was to keep us from stealing any of them, and to make sure we wouldn't keep our work back. When I brought mine to the store this evening the young man took them and paid me for their making, but Solomons had sold out, and I can't get my six dollars."

"How much do you get a dozen for making them?" asked Marion.

"A dollar and a half. They were boys' pants, you know, miss," explained the girl, readily.

Marion looked aghast. She could hardly believe such a statement, although it was plain that the others saw nothing astonishing in it.

"Is that the man in charge?" she asked, under her breath, just as a young man sauntered to the door and stood gazing out, listlessly.

"Yes, miss, that's him," said the girl, lowering her handkerchief. "He was Solomons' manager yesterday, but he says he's working for somebody else to-day."

Marion's fair face flushed, but she conquered her timidity and walked straight over to the youth, who was standing in the doorway.

"Is it true that these poor girls have been robbed?" she asked, quietly.

"I guess that's about the size of it," said the fellow, staring at her admiringly. "Solomons gave out a lot of cloth that he did not own to be made up and got deposits on it from all his sewers. The firm that owned the cloth took possession this afternoon, and Solomons lit out with all the money. We pay 'em for their work! We can't square up for Solomons!"

"And they have no redress!" cried Marion, in anguish. "No doubt the man Solomons has left town and gone where no one will find him."

"That wasn't necessary," said the young

man, with a shrug of his shoulders. "He knows those poor wretches haven't money enough to bother him. He'll just shave off his whiskers, change his name and open a new shop to-morrow."

"And that will mean more victims!" sighed Marion, with tears in her eyes. "Oh, is there no law in this big city to prevent such practices!"

She turned back toward the poor girls, who were still standing in a group, and just as she joined them a policeman walked up to them.

"What's the matter here?" he asked, in a not unkindly way.

As Marion explained the matter to him the good-natured "bluecoat" patted her gently on the shoulder.

"Sure now, don't be botherin' yer purty head wid the loikes av thim," he said. "It's just one av thim thricks av the chape conthractors. Onless one av thim women goes to court an' makes a complaint we can't aven luk fer Solomons, an' if she did, it's not loikely we'd foind him! He's probably wor-r-kin the same game in some other strate by now! Ye can't do nothin', miss, so ye'd best dispossess yer swate moind av the loikes av the whole business!"

Marion thanked him courteously for his good advice, and then put her arm tenderly around the weeping woman.

"Do you need this money so very badly?" she asked, softly.

"It was the rent money," said the girl, with a stifled groan. "There's three of us live together—Mamie and Fannie and me. Fannie can't do any hard work. She's crippled; so she just cooks and takes care of the room for us all. Mamie works in a store and gets four dollars a week, and she and I tend to all the expenses."

"Here," said Marion, putting her hand in her pocket and pulling out five dollars. "Take this; it will almost pay the rent, and I'll bring you the rest to-morrow; but do please take me to see Fannie, your friend, who is a cripple."

As the girl hesitated to accept the money, Marion pressed it into her hand, saying: "You must. I make it a Christmas present to you."

Her smile was so sweet that the girl could not resist her.

"Oh, thank you, miss!" she cried, impetuously. "You must be an angel."

A burst of genuine merriment relieved Marion considerably. It was quite a new sensation to be taken for an angel.

"Fannie will be so happy," said the girl again; "but it's an awful place to take a lady."

"Never mind, dear. I've seen 'awful places' before," said Marion, still laughing. "I have been poor myself—very, very poor—but, thank Heaven, I have always been well, and that is a great blessing."

Once more the girl looked at her with hungry eyes, as she slipped her hand into Marion's with a gentle motion.

"Oh, but not so poor as we are, I am sure, miss," she said, softly. "Why, you don't look as if you ever had a care in your life! Your face is so smooth and sweet! Oh, you are perfectly beautiful!"

"And so are you, only that your brow is wrinkled with anxiety," said Marion, quickly. "I am a country girl, dear. I have only lived a little while in the city, while you, you poor thing——"

She could get no further, for the girl interrupted her.

"And I was born right here—and in a garret," she said, bitterly; "and I live in a garret now. But come! you shall see it!"

The next minute she was hurrying along with Marion at her side, while her compan-

ions in misery walked slowly in other directions.

As they turned the corner into an even narrower street, a great burly fellow, uncommonly well dressed for that neighborhood, stepped suddenly in front of them and stared rudely at Marion.

"Go along, you rowdy! Can't you see she's a lady!" cried out the working girl, sharply. "Get away out of her path, or I'll make it hot for you!"

"Shut your mouth, you hussy!" exclaimed the man, brutally, at the same time leering at Marion in a repulsive manner.

"How dare you, sir!" exclaimed the young girl, proudly, as she drew herself up and frowned indignantly at the fellow.

"By Gad! but you're a hummer! A dead swell one at that! So you're a lady, eh? Well, that don't make no difference! I'm not particular! Give me a kiss, my beauty, or by the eternals, I'll steal it!"

"You will, will you?" screamed the girl, as the fellow made a grab for Marion.

"Take that for your impudence! you dirty blackguard!" she cried, springing between them.

The next instant she dealt him a ringing blow in the face. It was such a rousing slap that it stunned the fellow, and Marion could not help wondering how the strength to deliver it could be hidden in such wasted muscles.

The next minute the girl had caught her by the arm, and was almost dragging her into a nearby hallway.

CHAPTER VI.

A DEED IN THE DARKNESS.

After climbing a lot of stairs, Marion found herself in an attic room and in the presence of a thin, sallow-faced girl, whom her companion introduced as Fannie, the cripple.

A forlorn little stove in one corner did little more than to keep some of the cold out of the wretched apartment.

"I'm Sadie Webster," she said, as she bolted the door securely; "and Mamie Green is our other roommate's name, but I'm sorry to say she is working this evening."

"And who was that fellow that insulted us?" asked Marion, as soon as she had shaken hands cordially with the cripple.

"Oh, that was Jim French, the howling swell of the neighborhood," was the disgusted answer. "He lives at the saloon on the corner, as near as any one knows, and he's a loafer and a brute, and makes his own sister support him! She is one of those factory inspectors that's forever snooping around, only she never made any trouble for Solomons, you bet! He paid her too well for that! They say her brother is on to her crooked ways, and that's the way he makes her give up—by threatening to tell on her!"

Marion caught her breath. Here was news indeed; still, it was not a great surprise, for she had already suspected it.

This was the reason, then, that Miss French disliked her. She had seen that her tricks were likely to be discovered, and, no doubt, she would leave no stone unturned to rid herself of her company.

As Marion chatted with the girls, she kept thinking about Miss French. They were a disagreeable pair to meet, that sister and brother.

"You must stay to supper, Miss Marlowe," said Sadie Webster, eagerly; "not that we've got much to eat, or any fit place to eat it in. There's bread and cheese, I guess, and to-night we'll have some tea, for I can buy a quarter of a pound out of the money you gave me."

Marion drew a long sigh and her eyes filled with tears. Some way this scene had awakened bitter reflections. It had taken her

back to her first weeks in New York, when she and Dollie, her twin sister, lived together in one room, and sat down to many suppers of bread and milk, with only their love and hope to sweeten the repast.

She told the girls about it, and they listened to every word. There was a bond of sympathy between them when they learned that she, too, had suffered.

"Now I am living with a very rich woman as her guest," she added, cheerily; "and while that does not mean that I have much money of my own, it does mean that, for the time, at least, I am bountifully provided for, so you girls must not object if I try to help you a little."

"And you are an actress, Miss Marlowe?" cried Sadie, as Marion mentioned her last vocation.

"A very poor one, I assure you," said the young girl, modestly. "You see, I am having my voice cultivated for the operatic stage, and, oh, it takes such lots of money to pay for music lessons! I had to earn my living, and the stage position came to me at a time when I could not refuse it!"

"Oh, I would love to be an actress! Every one loves them!" cried Sadie, excitedly.

"And you long to be loved, don't you, dear?" asked Marion, smiling. "Well, be patient, Sadie; your true love will come! I shall pray that he comes quickly and takes you away from all this misery!"

"Oh, no one will ever love me!" was Sadie's bitter answer. "I shall die as I have lived—a poor, miserable creature! Oh, it is enough to drive me mad—it is, indeed, Miss Marlowe!"

She burst out crying, and Marion readily understood her. The poor girl was almost unnerved by the burdens she was bearing.

She had put off telling the cripple of her bad news until after supper, and Marion could not help appreciating the girl's consideration for her companion.

When she did tell Fannie of her employer's rascality she did so with her arm affectionately around the cripple's shoulders.

But even her tenderness could not avail. The shock came upon poor Fannie with overwhelming force. Before the story had been told she sighed heavily and fainted.

Marion snatched her hat quickly and started for the door.

"I am going to get some medicine," she said to Sadie. "Bathe her face, dear, and do the best you can. I'll send the medicine right in, and then telephone for a physician."

"Oh, don't! Please don't! We have no money to pay him!" cried Sadie, tearfully.

"He will not want any pay; he is a friend of mine!" called back Marion, as, without a moment's hesitation, she dashed down the dingy stairway.

It was nearly dark, and the street was poorly lighted, but the first figure that greeted the brave girl's gaze was that of Jim French, standing on the curb opposite the building.

With a faint tremor of fear creeping up in her heart, the young girl paused and scanned the corners of the block, in the hope of seeing the lights of a drug store.

As she stood irresolute the man crossed the street. He had evidently been watching for her to leave the building.

Marion summoned all her courage and started to walk down the block, knowing that this human monster was directly behind her.

"If he touches me, I will shriek at the top of my lungs," she thought; and then the question came into her mind, who would come to her assistance?

This part of the city was not noted for law or order, neither was it famed for its vigilant, conscientious policemen. She might scream in vain, for all she knew, and the

man might defile her with kisses even while she shrieked for assistance.

She walked a little faster after this horrible thought, but the steps behind her were also quickened.

Marion looked here and there, trying to see some man to whom she could appeal.

The atmosphere was heavy with dampness and strange odors, and as she neared the corner she discovered the whereabouts of the male residents of the block. They were making the interiors of the corner saloons ring with their maudlin songs and laughter.

"Not much to be expected from any of them!" she muttered. "A woman might be murdered here, for all they'd care. Oh, isn't it bad enough without their adding drunkenness to their misery!"

She was almost abreast of the swinging doors of the saloon, when she felt a heavy hand just touching her shoulder.

She wheeled around instantly, her eyes flashing like fire, and confronted the brutal visage of Jim French leering at her.

"So the pretty peach is really a sneak, is she?" sneered the man. "The fine lady with the angel face is just a common, ordinary spy, snooping around to make trouble for honest factory inspectors!"

Marion saw that he knew her, but her voice rang out like a trumpet.

"Touch me if you dare, you infamous bully! Take your hand from my shoulder at once, or you will regret it! I'll arouse the whole block if you follow me a step farther!"

What the man would have replied, Marion could not tell, for just at that second the swinging doors flew open and the young girl caught a glimpse of something that thrilled her soul with horror.

A great, hulking bartender had a drunken woman by the arm, and as the doors flew open he fairly hurled her through them, following her fearful exit with a perfect volley of curses.

The woman fell full length on the pavement at Marion's feet, and as she struck her head hit a sharp stone in the curb and a stream of blood gushed out like a fountain.

"Quick! Go to the nearest drug store and telephone to Dr. Brookes! His number is 1020 Madison," said Marion, sharply, as she turned upon the brute who had just insulted her.

There was something in her manner that awed the fellow, for even in her own moment of terror she had forgotten herself for another.

Without a word, he darted off, and Marion knelt on the curb and raised the bleeding head of the injured woman.

CHAPTER VII.

A STREET EPISODE.

In a very few seconds a crowd of wretched-looking people had gathered.

"Get me some water, quick!" commanded Marion of the first person that reached her.

Then she tore a strip from her white skirt and bound the woman's wound as skillfully as possible.

By this time a solitary policeman appeared upon the scene and forced his way through the mob about the prostrate woman.

A whistle of surprise passed his lips as he caught sight of Marion in the glow of light which the open door of the saloon was now throwing upon her.

"Ye best lave her alone, miss," he said, promptly. "I'll call an ambulance for the drunken crater. Sure, it's no place for the loikes av ye, attendin' her!"

"I wish you would call the ambulance quickly, please," said the young girl, lifting a face that was glowing with pity and indignation. "But I will not leave the poor woman until I see her on her way to the hospital! Any place is good enough for a person to do good in!"

"She's a brick!" exclaimed a man on the edge of the crowd. "'Tain't ther likes av her that's afraid of anything. Faith, and she naden't be, fer the saints will purtect her!"

As the policeman went off to call an ambulance the bartender came out of the saloon and watched the crowd sullenly.

"Ye've killed 'er, Jim! Better run fer it!" suggested some one.

"No, no! Don't let him escape!" cried Marion, quickly. "If she dies, it is his fault, and he must be punished!"

"She's right! Don't let him sneak!" said another voice. But he was a minute too late. The fellow had vanished.

Just then the ambulance rattled up with its gong clanging loudly, and in a second a skillful young surgeon was bending over the injured woman.

"Done as well as I could do it," he muttered, as he examined the bandage. Then, for the first time, he took a sharp look at Marion.

"Great Scott! what a place for a girl like you!" he said, impulsively.

"I am here on an errand of mercy," explained Marion, quickly. "There is a sick girl in this block, and I was on my way to get some medicine for her when this terrible thing happened. I used to be a nurse in Charity, so I knew just what to do; but, oh, do hurry and get her to the hospital! I'm afraid the brute has killed her, and made his escape in the excitement!"

"Don't worry about it! These things happen frequently down here," said the surgeon, as he helped his assistant place the woman in the ambulance.

"They happen so often that nobody minds them, miss," he said again; "but let me advise you to get out of this neighborhood at once! It is no place for any woman, much less a lady."

"I'll go now, only do please tell me where there is a drug store! There seems to be nothing but saloons around here, and poor Sadie will be worried if I don't get back soon with that medicine."

The surgeon directed her, and then sprang to his seat, and as the ambulance rattled away the crowd around Marion fell back almost respectfully.

In an instant Marion's eyes fell upon the form of the officer.

"That man who threw the woman out of the saloon has escaped," she said, distinctly. "I don't understand how these men who have wives and mothers of their own ever let him get away in such a perfectly easy manner. They ought to be ashamed of themselves for letting him go free, for, as like as not now, you will never be able to catch him!"

"Oh, Jim'll come back when he thinks it's blown over," said the officer, promptly. "I'll report it, of course, and thin I'll kape watch of the woman. If she dies, we'll ketch him, never fear, miss. If she don't, twon't make no diff, for she's used ter such treatment."

Marion shuddered with disgust, but hurried on to the drug store. Not a person followed her, and when she came back that way the saloon was in darkness and the street deserted.

She found Sadie Webster nearly frantic with anxiety.

The lame girl had revived, but was still so hysterical that she dared not leave her to look for Marion.

An hour passed rapidly, with both girls bending tenderly over the form of the poor cripple.

Suddenly a ringing call came floating up the stairway. Marion sprang to the door, almost trembling with eagerness.

"Oh, Dr. Brookes! do come right up," she cried, quickly. "It is too good to be true! I did not suppose he would obey me!"

A pair of strong arms encircled her for just a moment in the dark hallway, then Dr. Brookes spoke in his usual cheery manner.

"Who are you talking about, Marion? And why do you tremble so? Are you hurt, little girl? Quick, tell me what is the matter."

Marion did not answer, but led him toward the attic room. The next moment he, too, was bending over Fannie.

As he felt her pulse the young physician went on talking to Marion, whose face was now glowing with happy satisfaction.

"I just met my friend, Dr. Cole, on a Chambers Street Hospital ambulance, and he told me to come down here and rescue a young girl who was in a pack of wolves trying to do a deed of mercy. I guessed that it might be you, and here I am. But it took three men, two boys and an officer to direct me to this address."

Marion's heart sank heavily. She had hoped that Jim French had telephoned him, but it was evident that he had paid no attention to her wishes.

As soon as Fannie was more comfortable the doctor took Marion home. His carriage had been left nearby, as was his custom.

As Marion sank back upon the carriage cushions her face grew suddenly pale. The reaction of her day's work had at last overcome her.

"Marion, darling! I warned you not to do it!" cried the doctor, drawing her head down upon his shoulder. "Such sights as you have seen! Oh, Marion, it is not right that you should see them! Your sweet eyes should be kept from tears of sorrow. Your hands should not be allowed to perform such labors!"

The young girl did not answer—her nerves were all unstrung. Only a burst of quiet tears gave expression to her misery.

It was long after midnight before Marion reached home, only to find Mrs. Stetson's housekeeper greatly worried at her absence.

During Marion's stay with Mrs. Stetson all of the servants had learned to love her, and the housekeeper in particular came very near adoring her.

As the young girl entered her chamber and sank wearily into a chair, she gazed involuntarily upon the luxury about her.

Rich draperies and costly paintings, rare bric-a-brac and magnificent decorations greeted her eyes, but the only emotion that they all produced was a shiver of agony.

"Oh, why is it that one should have nothing and another all?" she cried, aloud. "Poor Sadie Webster! How I do pity her! Oh, I am so glad that it is in my heart to aid those poor creatures! God help me the day I become forgetful of their misery!"

There was a large bouquet of roses lying on the table, and as Marion finally rose to retire she went over and looked at them.

"From the doctor," she murmured, as she read the dainty card. "He has sent them to remind me that on the whole life is beautiful, and that it is one's own sacrifices that sweeten every pain of living! I shall take the roses down to that poor cripple to-morrow—all but this one," she added, as she selected a bud. "This one I will kiss for love's sake, and put it on my pillow, for, oh, it is sweet to know that I am beloved! When, oh, when will I know the ecstasy of loving?"

CHAPTER VIII.

MORE TREACHERY.

The day before Christmas was warmer than usual. The streets were bare of snow, and it looked as if the city was to have another "green Christmas."

Marion returned to the scene of her labors early in the morning. She was more anxious than ever to be of benefit to these people, after what she had seen in her short experi-

ence. There was no one in Mr. Landale's office when she arrived but Tom, the office boy.

"Mornin', Miss Marler!" exclaimed that individual, politely. "I'm all erlone in my glory ter-day! There's er note on ther desk fer you, an' his nibs won't be here this mornin'."

Marion opened the note that the boy handed her and glanced over it. Then a puzzled expression swept across her features.

" 'Tain't no love letter, I reckin," said the boy, who was watching her. "His joblots must er bin as mad as er wet hen when he writ it, 'cause he'd been havin' a Jim Dandy scrap wid Frenchy!"

"What in the world do you mean?" asked Marion, wonderingly.

"Why, his nibs, ther boss, and Frenchy had er go-as-you-please after you'd went yesterday," explained the boy, calmly. "She's jealous or sumthin'—I don't know 'zactly—but, Jimminy! didn't the fur fly! You'd orter seen 'em! She knocked him out in one round, tho', jest as easy as nothin'. Ther Corbett an' Fitz fight wasn't a marker to it, Miss Marler!"

"Well, but what has that to do with me?" asked Marion, innocently, as she read over the note again, which she was still holding in her fingers.

"I reckin it has sumthin' ter do wid yer, but I don't know jest wat," said the boy. "She kep' a mentionin' yer name, an' accusin' him of bein' stuck on yer. Yer see, she's hot after him herself, an' that's where ther shoe pinches."

Marion's red lips curled in a disdainful smile, but she did not deign to ask any more questions.

"You will please tell Mr. Landale that I will go about as usual," she said, a little proudly. "But he need not worry about my annoying Miss French—and I will report what I see in future to Dr. Brookes."

"You're a dandy, all right!" said the boy, admiringly; "but I reckin he was rattled w'en he writ that note. He'll get over it, most likely, an' be as meek as Moses!"

Marion started to leave the office, but Tom had not stopped talking.

"Look out fer Frenchy, Miss Marler; she's er treach'rous critter," he said, quickly. "She's er scrapper from Scrappersville, an' I don't reckin you are much on the scrap, are you? If Frenchy pitches inter yer, jest let me know, Miss Marler—I'll get in ther row wid bote feet an' be mighty glad ter be there!"

"Thank you," said Marion, smiling at the interested lad. "I appreciate your offer, but I hardly think I shall have any trouble."

She turned toward the door, and at that moment it opened and Mr. Landale entered.

Both Marion and Tom stared at him in surprise, which only deepened when he smiled and greeted them as pleasantly as ever.

Almost without thinking, Marion covered the note that she was holding; for in an instant the thought had come to her that the gentleman had never written it.

"On time, I see, Miss Marlowe," began Mr. Landale, kindly. "Well, I am glad of that, for I have a lot to say to you."

Tom threw up both hands behind his employer's back, and Marion took the mute sign to mean that the gentleman's words had completely dumfounded him.

As Mr. Landale handed her a chair, she slipped the note quietly into her pocket, thinking that it would be well to keep it until matters developed a little.

Mr. Landale's first words took Marion completely by surprise, and it was only by a great effort of the will that she succeeded in concealing it.

"Miss French did not quite understand your position with us, yesterday, Miss Marlowe," he said, pleasantly; "and as she is extremely sensitive, I fancy she thought you were watching her movements. However, I have explained to her that you have nothing to do with her work, and are only endeavoring to aid our friend, the Doctor. Of course, to-day you will be with her again, and, if she is at all disagreeable, try not to notice it. The feeling will wear off very soon, I trust, and then you and she will be able to do good work together."

Marion's big gray eyes grew thoughtful as the gentleman spoke, and when he finished she asked a simple question.

"You have perfect confidence in Miss French as an inspector, then, Mr. Landale?"

For just a minute the gentleman stared at her curiously.

"I try to trust my inspectors as long as I can," he said, evasively; "and thus far I have never heard nor seen anything that reflected on Miss French's veracity."

Marion averted her eyes in an indifferent manner. She had no intention of arousing suspicion against the woman until she could furnish proof that she was justified in so doing.

Five minutes later Mr. Landale went out, leaving Marion copying the list of places that she was to visit.

"Well, if dat don't beat de Dutch!" was Tom's first comment. "W'y, Miss French told me las' night dat de boss had went away an' wouldn't be back afore dis evenin'."

"And did she give you the note to give to me?" asked Marion, quickly.

The boy nodded his head. There was no time to speak. The door had opened again, and this time it was Miss French who stood upon the threshold.

For just a minute the woman looked angry and surprised.

"Has Landale been here?" she asked Tom.

"Of course, w'y not!" asked the boy, a trifle impudently. "Tink he's er goin' ter quit his job ter please yer royal highness? Not on yer tintype! He ain't dat kind of er chicken!"

The frown passed from the woman's brow in a miraculous manner, and as she turned to Marion she was actually smiling.

"What uncertain creatures men are," she said, almost amiably. "Why, Mr. Landale told me yesterday that he would be away to-day, and he also dictated a note to you, Miss Marlowe."

"He seemed to have forgotten it this morning," said the young girl, dryly; "inasmuch as he has just given me my orders to accompany you again to-day, Miss French."

This time the woman scowled angrily, in spite of her attempt to hide her feelings.

"Oh, very well, then. Of course, I must submit to his caprices. We will start at once, if you please, Miss Marlowe."

Marion handed her the list that Mr. Landale had left, but kept her own copy hidden in her pocket. She had her own reasons for wanting to keep the addresses of the places visited, in order to be able to go back if she ever wished to do so.

For the next four hours they visited shop after shop, and in each instance it seemed to Marion that the inspector was bent on making trouble.

When they were ready for luncheon Miss French excused herself politely. She had an engagement to lunch with a friend, so Marion went alone to a small restaurant. The moment she got inside she drew her list from her pocket.

Miss French had deliberately passed the doors of several of the places where she had been told by Mr. Landale to pay a visit.

When Marion had finished her lunch, she walked directly to a certain building, which

she had visited the day before, and, mounting the stairs, bravely opened the door of the workroom.

There, just in front of her, was the eleven-year-old child whom Miss French had assured her would be removed.

She was bending over her machine, as usual, which was exactly what Marion had expected.

CHAPTER IX.

DECOYED INTO TROUBLE.

Marion closed the door softly without anyone having seen her, and as she descended the stairs she had much food for reflection.

Sadie Webster's words had opened her eyes, and here was absolute proof of Miss French's treachery to her duty.

She took out her list again and looked it over. No doubt those were the places which the inspector favored for a money consideration, but the question was—how could she prove it?

As she turned a corner she came suddenly upon Sadie Webster, but the girl had her back toward Marion, and consequently did not notice her.

She was standing on the curb, talking to a well-dressed man. He was a Hebrew, of middle age, and fairly glittered with diamonds.

Almost instinctively, Marion felt that something was wrong, for Sadie's cheeks were crimson as she listened to what her companion was saying.

For the first time it occurred to Marion what a really pretty girl Sadie was. She was pale and hollow-eyed, of course, but her features were unusually winsome. A little fresh air and sunshine would have worked a miracle with a face like hers, and a breath of happiness and love would have rendered it beautiful.

As Marion hesitated a moment, she was attracted by Sadie's expression. Her lids were downcast and her cheeks suffused with blushes. Evidently the man was whispering tender things in her ear, and for a second Marion felt a sympathetic thrill of delight. Then her whole frame was shaken with an ominous shiver.

Just before she reached them the man walked on, and in a second Sadie was surprised to find Marion's arm about her shoulders.

"Who was he, dear?" asked Marion, as sweetly as possible; "some great nabob of the East Side, I should judge, by the glitter of his diamonds."

The girl's cheeks burned deeper, but her eyes flashed a little.

"He's a very rich man," she began, almost defiantly. "He owns houses and land and no end of diamonds, and——"

She could not seem to go on, so Marion helped her.

"And is he going to lay all these at your feet, Sadie?" she asked, trying to be as calm as possible. "You are plenty sweet enough, Sadie, to richly deserve them."

A sudden pallor took the place of the blush on the young girl's face, but in an instant a spark of resentment shone in her eyes at Marion's question.

"Do you think a rich man like him would marry a poor girl like me?" she asked, abruptly. "No, there's no such good luck for Sadie Webster. She must slave, slave, slave, or else—do something entirely different!"

"What! you don't mean that he insulted you!" cried Marion, quickly. "Oh, Sadie, did he dare suggest anything—different?"

Sadie tossed her head and a deep red spot glowed on each cheek.

"Well, what does it matter if he did?" she asked, sharply. "Isn't he rich enough to do as he pleases; and am I in any position to resent his offer? Look here, Miss Marlowe,

poor Fannie is a cripple! Neither of us girls have any work, and we don't know where to look for any. Am I to blame if I try to better my condition, and at the same time help my two miserable friends?"

"But will you be bettering yourself, dear?" asked Marion, eagerly. "Will you not be selling all that you have that is best in this world at the risk of its not being in any way appreciated? Men are so fickle in all those attachments, Sadie, and when a woman is once down, how is she going to recover? Think well before you leap, dear Sadie, do; for it is a terrible leap—one that you can never get back from!"

"It doesn't matter," said the girl again. "There's nothing in life but pain and sorrow. A few days of shame will not make it any more bitter!"

"Oh, yes they will, indeed!" cried Marion, quickly. "As you are to-day, you can hold up your head with the proudest lady in the land; as you may be to-morrow—oh, Sadie, where will you be to-morrow?"

"Don't! don't! Miss Marlowe," broke in the poor girl, piteously. "I was crazy to think of it, but I was almost desperate."

Marion clasped her arms about her and kissed her tenderly, at the same time slipping a ten-dollar bill into the trembling fingers.

"Keep your soul free from that sin," she murmured, eagerly; "for no gold or jewels can efface the stain. The sin will eat at your heart like a malignant cancer, and every ray of life's sunshine will be blotted out forever."

Sadie burst out crying, but they were tears of gratitude. She seemed to realize all at once what Marion had done for her.

A moment later they parted, expecting to meet again soon, for neither could, by any possibility, foresee what was in store for them.

As Marion hurried back to the office, she met Tom, the office boy.

"Frenchy says to meet her here right away!" he said, grinning as he ducked his cap, with an attempt at politeness.

Marion took the scrap of paper that he handed her and looked at the address upon it. She was not familiar with the locality mentioned.

Tom was off like a flash, so Marion walked on. She had a vague idea that she was going in the right direction, and after turning two or three corners she saw the name of the street upon a lamp-post.

When she reached the address given, she found it to be a tall six-story tenement house, situated in the middle of the block. The buildings on both sides were factories of various sorts and from all about came the busy whir of machinery and the smell of oil.

From the windows of the tenement house occasionally peered a black-bearded man or a dark-eyed woman, and Marion at once realized that they were the lowest type of Hebrews.

She entered the hall, and was at once plunged into semi-darkness. She hesitated for a moment, and was half inclined to wait on the sidewalk for Miss French, but there was no way of knowing that the inspector was not ahead of her.

"Pshaw!" she said to herself as she set her foot on the first step of the dirty stairs. "The idea of me—Marion Marlowe—being nervous! I must be growing morbid at the sight of all this misery!"

She made her way up to the room designated in the note, which was on the top floor. She heard a busy hum through the closed door, and then, turning the knob, stepped resolutely inside.

There was a score of men in the room, all of them dark-skinned, dirty and repulsive, with tangled, unkempt black beards, like the proverbial beards of the prophets. They seemed to be having a sort of conference

about something; but Marion did not have time to realize what it was, before one of them came toward her in a threatening manner.

"Vell, vat do you vant?" he asked, in broken English.

Marion nerved herself to answer him politely:

"I am only waiting for Miss French, the factory inspector."

The man apparently understood only her last words.

"Oh!—so—der vactory inspegdor! Der fine, fresh vactory inspegdor! Ve are ferry glat to see you, my tear; ve haf peen lookin' for you!" he exclaimed, with apparent exultation. Then he turned to the rest and shouted a few words in a foreign language, which was as Greek to Marion.

In an instant the throng had completely surrounded her, all of them talking at once and glaring at her fiercely.

"You vas der nice vomans vat tooked tree of my girl avay from me last veek!" exclaimed one; "tree of my best hands, and shust pecause dey hat no health certificate!"

"She is ein ropper!" shouted another, as he shook his dirty fist in Marion's face.

"Oh—vat fine close she vears!" said a cross-eyed little Jew, coming close to her and clutching her dress-skirt in his filthy fingers. "See vat fine close she vares, and she von't let us make der brice of a loaf of pread for our fambilies—oh, vat a fine laty!"

Marion turned her flashing eyes upon them in utter disgust and disdain.

"How dare you touch me?" she demanded. "Take your hands off of me this instant!"

"So—so—not so fast, my fine laty!" said another, whose beard was smeared with tobacco juice; "ve vant to see more of you. Don't be so up-startish."

Marion turned toward the door, but a half dozen of them stood in her way with their hands outstretched.

"Let me pass, you blackguards!" she demanded. "Let me out this instant!"

"Led you owid? A fine laty like you? Not mooch; ve vant you; ve haf a pill to settle mit you. You must stay vid us for some time, my tear inspegdor; ve lof you so mooch!" said the fellow, furiously.

Marion's beautiful face was crimson now, and her big, gray eyes flashed fire as she faced her tormentors.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE HANDS OF RUFFIANS.

A perfect howl of appreciation greeted this last speech, but Marion had grown desperate in her fearful position.

As she faced them her eyes seemed to emit flashes of fire, and, for a moment, the vilest wretch among them stared in actual admiration.

Then a vicious-looking fellow made a sudden spring to her side. As his dirty hand clutched her shoulder, Marion struck him fairly and squarely.

The fellow reeled backward into a fellow workman's arms, and this seemed the signal to the rest for a general outbreaking.

One of the brutes tore her fur cape from her shoulders, while another snatched at her watch, and for a moment it seemed to Marion that she was but a feather in their clutches.

At that instant the door opened and Miss French entered the room. There was a fiendish glow in her eyes as she caught sight of Marion.

The men all turned to see who had entered, and in that second Marion sprang forward and seized a heavy pair of shears that were lying on a table.

Just then the inspector's voice rang out across the room.

"That's the one! She's been making all the trouble!" she cried, sharply. "Give it to her, men! Only don't quite kill her!"

"So this is your work, is it?" thought Marion, but she did not speak—only set her teeth firmly as she faced her tormentors.

"I told you we often took our lives in our hands," sneered Miss French again; "but you would stick to the business, you know, Miss Marlowe."

The next moment she was gone, and Marion was again alone with the ruffians, but the clumsy weapon in her hand seemed to awe them a little. A group of the oldest men seemed to confer with each other for a moment, and Marion knew instinctively that they were planning what to do with her. She was absolutely at the mercy of these vicious beasts, and, as she realized it, a sudden faintness crept over her.

Every sweet memory of the past seemed to pass before her, and all her dreams of the future were swiftly turned into mocking phantoms.

But keenest of all came the mockery of her position. She had undertaken this work in the cause of humanity and through sheer love of her more unfortunate fellow men; yet here she was encompassed by human monsters, her very life threatened by their inhuman passions.

A vision of her friends, Miss Allyn, Bert Jackson, the doctor, and others, passed before her eyes. She could imagine their distress if they but knew of her present predicament.

The thought of the doctor nerved her to fresh courage. For his sake and because she had determined to be his aid in this thankless work, she would try to outwit her heartless tormentors. Still she could not help trembling from head to foot.

They would harm her—perhaps kill her, or even worse. The last thought brought a horror that almost overwhelmed her.

Another insult from one of the wretches brought her back to her senses.

She raised the heavy shears instantly and was on the defensive.

Ruffian that he was, the fellow fell back. There was a look in her eyes that warned him not to touch her.

The men who had been jabbering to one another so unanimously seemed to have decided upon something now, and, with a sigh of horror, Marion's glance swept the length and breadth of the dingy workroom.

There was a door ten feet behind her, but to what did it lead? The poor girl's limbs trembled beneath her as she asked herself the question.

But anything was better than awaiting their next move. She kept the shears raised warningly, and began backing swiftly toward the door.

The men saw her movement and a perfect bedlam followed, but, like a flash of lightning, Marion had turned the knob and found herself in a low room lighted only by a skylight.

A rickety ladder led up to this skylight, which was open, and quite large enough for her to crawl through.

She was up like a flash with the whole pack after her, but she was by far too quick for the clumsy fellows.

"Follow me if you dare!" she cried, as she reached the roof; "I will strike the first man that attempts it, and I will strike with all my might! Shame on you, you brutes!"

She was trembling with terror, but her voice did not betray her, and, as she glared at them through the skylight, there was not one that dared follow her.

A moment later an idea occurred to her, and she promptly put it into execution. She dragged the heavy skylight over the opening and then sat down on it.

"They shall not come up here!" she panted, breathlessly; "but how can I get down from this awful place? I am liable to get into another part of the same building if I attempt to descend any of them."

She stared about the monstrous roof; there were half a dozen skylights, any and all of which might lead into the very same company's workshops that she had quitted. Yet, above all the horror of her own position, the young girl was suffering from the inspector's treachery. The pain of personal fear was almost nothing as compared to the pain of a sister woman's perfidy.

She tried to collect her thoughts, but it was almost impossible, for she was sitting in the face of a biting wind, and already her fingers were becoming benumbed with the cold.

She looked down through the thick glass

of the skylight, but the men had gone. No doubt they were satisfied with the knowledge that she was safe and a prisoner.

Marion crept along the roof until she reached the protection of a chimney. Her hands were beginning to ache, and the wind was cutting her cheeks like a knife.

As she leaned against the chimney she found it warm to her touch. As the heat commenced to return to her hands and body she sank down heavily, with a feeling of sudden faintness. Then her head fell lower and lower, and she seemed to float off into total darkness.

CHAPTER XI.

DR. BROOKES TO THE RESCUE.

While Marion was lying unconscious on the roof, Dr. Brookes called at Mr. Landale's office, and was greatly alarmed that nothing had been seen of the young girl since she went out in the morning, accompanied by the inspector.

As he was leaving the office, Tom, the office boy, followed him.

"There's somethin' in ther wind, mister," he said, pulling the doctor's coat-tails. "Frenchy, the inspector, hates Miss Marler, an' I reckon she's put up er job on her. She wuz to meet her at one er ther toughest shops in ther whole push, an' it's time she was back if she's ever comin'."

"Where was it?" asked Dr. Brookes, handing the boy a quarter.

Tom gave him the address with a grin of delight; then his shrewd face grew wistful, as he added:

"I'd give a hull lot, boss, if you'd take me wid yer."

"Come on," said the doctor, without looking behind; and without another word, the two started after Marion.

As they hurried along, the doctor caught sight of Sadie Webster. He knew her at once from having seen her the night before; but he was a little surprised to see that she was accompanied by a man—a middle-aged Hebrew, wearing a vulgar display of diamonds.

But he had no time to think of Sadie now. His mind was upon another fair girl whom he loved devotedly.

If through his consent to let her help him any trouble had come to Marion, the doctor felt that he would never forgive himself. Already she had passed through many terrifying experiences; but the thought that he should be the one to let another come upon her made his brow dark with frowns and his face gray with pallor.

Almost at the door of the sweat-shop he caught sight of Miss French.

She was standing in the hallway, talking to a big, brutal-looking man, whom Tom promptly informed him was the inspector's brother.

"Heavens! Why, he looks like a tough!" were his words of surprise. "Is it possible that Landale's inspectors are chosen from such families?"

He was about to speak to her when she eluded him cleverly. At the first glimpse of his figure she had disappeared into one of the lower rooms.

Dr. Brookes glanced up the long, narrow flight of rotten stairs.

Had Marion, the beautiful girl whom he adored with his very soul, been lured up those steps for any vile purpose, or had she ascended them willingly on some mission of charity?

There was no answer to his thoughts, but the very silence seemed to fall about him ominously. Taking a good, firm grip on his heavy walking-stick, he bounded up the first staircase.

At the moment he disappeared two people came swiftly out of the dark corners of the lower hall, and Miss French stepped close to her brother and whispered softly.

"The girl is on the roof, and the skylight is closed! Quick! go in next door under some pretext or other, and see if you can't get up there before that dude doctor finds her."

"He'll lose her for fair if I do," grinned her brother; "for she's the prettiest thing that ever happened. I don't mind a scrap or two if I can just get her in my clutches."

"Well, look out for her! She's a terror, and she's got a big pair of shears," said his sister, warningly. "I'll go home and wait.

If you can get her down into the workshop the men will help you."

"Or you'll make it hot for them: ain't that so, sis?" laughed the fellow. "Well, I'll tell them they must help or you'll ruin their business by reporting the state of their building to the Board of Health or taking off all their girls under fourteen to-morrow!"

"That will do it," said the woman, with a malicious sneer. "They'd kill her for you if you threatened all that! They dread a plumber's bill far worse than they do murder."

"I'll fix her—and them!" said her brother, darting away. "The prettiest girl that I ever saw. It's worth taking some risks to have the fun of taming her!"

Miss French left the building quickly and hurried away, little dreaming that a pair of sharp eyes were following her.

For Tom, the office boy, had suddenly changed his mind about accompanying the doctor. As soon as he saw Miss French in the doorway he determined to track her, for he felt almost sure that she would go to meet Marion.

If any one had asked him why he thought so, he would not have been able to tell them; but he followed his first instinct, which was to shadow the woman. Through one street after another the boy kept closely in her wake, and was thoroughly astounded when she finally led him into a really fine neighborhood.

"Hully Gee! but she's swell!" he muttered to himself. "Twenty-five per don't pay fer all dat. W'y, dat house is er corker, but den she may have a hall bedroom."

Then the boy began racking his brains a little, and as Miss French let herself into the handsome mansion with a latchkey, he waited just long enough for her to reach her room, then went up promptly and pulled the doorbell.

"I've er message fer Miss French," he said, politely, to the maid who opened the door. "She just come in, but I couldn't ketch her. I'll go right up if you'll jest say which her room is."

"Second floor front," said the maid, good naturedly.

Without losing a second, for fear she might change her mind, Tom bolted up the stairs and rapped on Miss French's door. The next moment he was confronted by Miss French herself, looking very much at home in a handsomely furnished apartment.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SCENE ON THE ROOF.

The shrieks of a score or more factory whistles awakened Marion Marlowe, for, fortunately for her, she had drifted from the realms of unconsciousness into dreamless slumber.

As she sat up and looked around, the horror of her situation dawned suddenly upon her. It was six o'clock, and the sweat-shops were closing. The banging of iron shutters on every side told that another day of toil had ended. It was now Christmas Eve.

Marion sprang to her feet with a fresh terror in her eyes. She had suddenly observed that all the skylights were being closed, and that she was fast being shut out from all prospect of assistance.

In a very few minutes she would be alone and doomed to spend the night on the cold roof of this building.

Below on the street all was joy and hilarity in anticipation of the holiday the next day, for Christmas is widely, though not universally, observed on the East Side.

At last a black head apeared above a distant skylight, and Marion darted forward, fairly shrieking for assistance.

There was a minute's hesitation, then the head appeared above the opening; then it was suddenly withdrawn, only to give place to another.

This time Marion fairly gasped with a new sensation, for the man who was coming toward her was no other than Jim French, the bully who had insulted her on the street the previous evening.

"I am lost! lost!" she whispered, as her lips turned white with terror. "Oh! what a wicked woman that inspector is; for it must be her doings. She has sent him to me."

As the fellow approached her, Marion felt her nerves grow tense. She would defend herself tooth and nail, if need be; but, oh, the pity and the horror of what was coming!"

With a leer on his cruel face, Jim French came towards her, first kicking the skylight carelessly over the opening, as if to prevent intrusion.

"Hello, Birdie! So here you are!" he called out, tauntingly. "Well, I must say they've put you in a pretty coop! Glad to see me, ain't you? Come, own up, pretty!"

Marion clinched her hands and set her teeth firmly.

"If you have come to help me escape from this awful place, I am certainly very glad to see you, Mr. French," she said, sternly; "but if you have come to insult me, that is another thing, and I have no way of knowing which is your intention."

"Oh, I'll help you escape all right," said the fellow, grinning; "but, of course, you don't expect me to do it for nothing. A fellow don't often meet such a peach as you are. Gee! but you're a dandy! Prettiest thing that ever happened!"

He had stopped directly in front of Marion, and was staring at her rudely, with an expression on his face that covered her cheeks with blushes.

All the depravity in his nature seemed concentrated in his glance, and the pure girl actually cowered and shrank before such a show of bestiality.

"If you'll come with me without no kick, I'll take you down," he said, finally. "I've got the bulge on them Jews, so that they don't dare say anything; but if you're going to balk, I'll just leave you right here. The Lord help you, my beauty, if they ever come up here!"

Marion shivered with horror at the fellow's suggestion. Another sight of those fiendish features would almost drive her to desperation.

"Have you no heart, no conscience?" she pleaded, earnestly; "is it possible, Mr. French, that you cannot respect helplessness in a woman?"

The man burst out into a rude laugh at her words.

"That kind of talk would go all right with a parson," he sneered; "but, as it happens, I'm a man with blood in his veins, and one that ain't flinging his good fortune over his shoulder, neither!"

As the man was speaking, Marion's glance wandered aimlessly, and, just as he finished, one of the skylights moved a little.

Without appearing to do so, the girl watched it intently. There was a thrill in her soul that told her instinctively that help was near her.

"If you are a man, you will be brave and honorable," she cried, suddenly, her whole desire at the instant being to keep his gaze fixed upon her features.

"If you are a man, you will protect me, instead of injuring me. See, I throw myself upon your mercy!" she cried, almost hysterically.

Again the fellow stared at her, for her changing emotions puzzled him. Her eyes seemed riveted upon his face, and their expression startled him. He seemed powerless to remove his gaze from the magnetic charm of her countenance.

"I'll protect you, of course; that is, from the Jews," he began, coarsely; "but you understand you've got to promise to go with me; there mustn't be no kick when we reach the sidewalk."

It was only by a heroic effort that Marion forced herself to answer and to keep her eyes upon his face, instead of upon the creeping form just behind him. One false step on the roof and the secret would be out. With this thought in her mind, she almost screamed her answer:

"Oh, you must rescue me without any promises, Mr. French! I am helpless and at your mercy, and you must show yourself a man. Say you will conduct me to the street in safety from those ruffians, and accept my sincere thanks for the nobility of your service!"

Another burst of laughter followed this appeal.

"Well, you're a corker and no mistake! Do you think I'm any such fool as that? No, not on your life, my little beauty! If I take you from this roof it is for one purpose alone. Refuse, and you stay here; that's all there is about it!"

Marion took a step backward and held her breath as the brazen-tongued bully made his cowardly assertion.

Then a light step just behind him attracted Jim French's attention. He turned quickly and confronted an athletic young man. The next second he fell heavily, struck down by a blow from the heavy end of a polished walking-stick.

CHAPTER XIII.

SAFE ONCE MORE.

"Safe!"

Marion Marlowe breathed the word as her foot touched the sidewalk. She was leaning on the arm of her rescuer, Dr. Brookes, and, although her face was pale, she was smiling happily.

The young physician said nothing, but hurried her along, and, almost before she knew it, Marion was in the room with Fannie, the cripple.

"Try and rest, Marion," he whispered, when he had placed her in a chair. "I will come for you in an hour, and, meanwhile, I will send in some supper, for you must be famished."

"No, doctor, it isn't necessary," spoke up the cripple, quickly. "See, I have plenty of food. I can give Miss Marlowe a regular banquet!"

Marion's cheeks turned even paler, but she let the doctor go before she replied; then, as she glanced at Fannie, her great, honest eyes spoke for her.

"Sadie brought them," said the girl, who was fairly beaming with happiness. "Just think, Miss Marlowe, Sadie has actually got

married, and she has made her husband give Mamie and me some money, just exactly as if we were her sisters."

Marion tried to smile, but it was a feeble effort, and as for the "banquet," she hardly tasted it.

Her own misfortunes were as nothing compared to this, for her heart seemed scorched by this news of Sadie.

When the doctor came he found her almost in a fever, and in less than an hour he had her safely back at Mrs. Stetson's.

"I think this will end your slumming for the season, Marion," he said, decidedly. "Why, if you were not the healthiest girl in the world, the shock of your outrageous treatment would alone have killed you! The scene in that work-room must have been simply awful! It makes my blood boil to think of those scoundrels!"

Marion turned upon him a questioning glance. She was wondering just how much he had discovered.

"One of the men told me the whole story," he explained; "he told me that- that Miss French is a dreadful woman. Why, she actually quadruples her salary by neglecting her duty, and those contractors pay her handsomely for not reporting the condition of their factories. She has been so sly that Landale has not learned of it; but Tom, the office boy, has suspected her for some time. This afternoon he followed her home, and found that she lives in actual luxury!"

"And supports her brother in laziness!" said Marion, quickly. "That fellow that you knocked down was her brother, doctor!"

"Is it possible? Well, he's safe for awhile," was the thankful answer. "I sent an officer up for him while you were waiting at Sadie's."

"And what can be done with those miserable factory men?" asked Marion, shivering; "those black-hearted creatures who so nearly killed me?"

A dark frown gathered on the physician's handsome face.

"Landale will know what to do with them when I tell him about it," was the answer; "but, meanwhile, I have detectives on the track of Miss French, and I fancy that her arrest will show up the whole matter."

Marion had been resting in an easy chair in Mrs. Stetson's parlor as they talked, and her head fell forward on her hand as her friend stopped talking.

"Poor Sadie! poor Sadie!" she whispered, softly. "Oh, I cannot blame her, for her life was awful!"

"What about her?" asked the doctor, as he suddenly recalled where he had last seen Sadie.

"I am afraid she has yielded to temptation," she said, sadly. "Poor thing! The weight of poverty and suffering was too great! She has given her soul for a rich man's money!"

"I hope not, indeed," said the doctor, frowning; "but I will look her up the first thing to-morrow, and, perhaps, it will not be too late to make her reconsider her actions."

Marion shook her head. She seemed to be doubtful.

"I feel that she is lost; she is so weak," she said, softly; "besides, she has no work. She has sinned to provide for her friends—Mamie and the cripple."

A maid entered at that moment and handed Marion some letters. As she noticed the addresses, she smiled more brightly.

"Old friends and true," she murmured, tapping the envelopes. "A letter from Mr. Ray, Burt Jackson and Alma Allyn!"

"Old friends, indeed, and good ones, too," said the doctor, laughing. "Are you happy to hear from Archie Ray, Marion?"

There was such a tinge of meaning in his tones that Marion looked up, archly.

"I am very proud of Mr. Ray, and I am always glad to hear from him," she said, smilingly. "He has been away from New York for some time now. Yes, I shall be glad to see him."

"Good-night, Marion," was the only answer, as the young man arose to go.

"Good-night, Dr. Brookes," said Marion, still smiling.

As their hands met, all the coldness in the doctor's voice melted.

"Dear, noble girl," he murmured, tenderly. "Alike tender and true to old friends and new! You are too good for this world, Marion, my queen! If you would only cultivate a few shortcomings, I should feel so much easier."

"Oh, I am not so good that there is any danger of my dying," laughed the young girl. "A person who can go through what I have been through is pretty sure to have a long life before her."

The physician smiled. Her words sounded prophetic. He seemed to feel in his innermost soul that Marion had a long life before her. But what sort of a life was it to be?

The question puzzled him, for he was powerless to answer it.

This beautiful girl's career thus far had been one succession of extraordinary episodes. Would it change some time for worse or better?

But Dr. Brookes was not a man to waste much time in speculation, so, as he left her presence, he put all puzzling questions away from him. Christmas Day he was again

with Marion. He had come to tell her the result of his efforts.

"Landale has sifted the whole thing, and Miss French has been arrested," he said; "and, between the Board of Health and the Government, those sweat-shops are having a hard time of it."

"And Sadie?" questioned Marion, with a little quiver in her voice.

The doctor's eyes brightened, and he smiled as he answered.

The fellow married her last night," he said, quickly. "She is now a married woman, and her husband is really very good to her, they tell me."

Marion drew a long sigh, but her face brightened a little. This was bad enough, but it was better than she expected.

"Punishment will speedily follow for the guilty," went on the doctor, calmly. "Are you satisfied with your labors, Marion?"

"I am afraid I shall have to be, thanks to a Christmas present I received this morning," laughed Marion, as she drew a letter from her pocket. "I have just received this from the manager of the Temple Theatrical Company. He says he has a plan for a novel production. Just a tour of four months to fill in the rest of the winter and early spring."

"Are you ready to go back to the stage, Marion?" asked the young man, quickly.

A flush of ambition tinged the fair girl's brow, and she looked straight into his eyes as she answered:

"Yes, doctor! Ready and eager!"

THE END

Marion Marlowe's resolve to return to the stage was kept, and next week the story of her reappearance will be told in MY QUEEN (No. 14) in a story entitled, "Marion Marlowe's Escape: or, A Dangerous Mistake 'on the Road.'" Nearly all of Marion's old friends will appear in the story, which will relate a terrifying experience Marion went through as the result of her being mistaken for a member of her company; and how the final production of the play, despite many obstacles, was successfully accomplished. Commencing with No. 14, the forthcoming numbers of MY QUEEN will deal with a new series of experiences in Marion Marlowe's career, which will prove of the liveliest interest.

PATTERN COLUMN.

By special arrangements with the manufacturers we are enabled to supply the readers of MY QUEEN with the patterns of all garments described or illustrated in this column at TEN CENTS each. Address, "Pattern Column," MY QUEEN, 238 William Street, New York City.

☞ *In ordering patterns be sure to give size and number.*

No. 2374—THREE-PIECE SKIRT.

(Perforated for round length.)

This skirt, which is especially adapted to wide wool goods, is shaped with a front gore and a wide side gore extending to the center-back. The lining and outside material are cut the same shape. Cloth, homespun, cheviot and novelty wool goods can be used for making these skirts. The pattern is cut in sizes 22 to 32 inches waist measure. Size 24 requires 7 1-2 yards of 21-inch or 3 3-4 yards of 54-inch material, and measures 3 3-4 yards at the lower edge in the round length.

No. 2376—LADY'S JACKET.

The accompanying picture presents a street jacket in dark brown camel's hair serge. This stylish little jacket is short, the back extending but a few inches below the waist. The front laps in double-breasted style and forms revers at the top, which meet the gored rolling collar. The two-seamed coat sleeve flares in bell shape at the hand, and is gathered at the shoulder. The pattern is cut in sizes 32 to 42 inches bust measure. Size 36 requires 2 1-2 yards of 42-inch or 2 yards of 54-inch material.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

BY GRACE SHIRLEY

NOTE.—This department is a special feature of this publication, and it will be appreciated, we feel sure, by all our readers. It is conducted by Miss Shirley, whose remarkable ability to answer all questions, no matter how delicate the import, has become well known. Readers of "MY QUEEN" need not hesitate to write her on any subject. Miss Shirley will have their interests at heart and will never refuse her assistance or sympathy. As all letters are answered only through the columns of "MY QUEEN," it is unnecessary to enclose stamps. STREET & SMITH.

"Will you be kind enough to help a girl of sixteen who is in distress? I have quite a number of gentlemen friends from sixteen to eighteen years of age and am deeply in love with a young man of sixteen, who also shows much affection for me. I go with two girls who never like me to speak to him, but it is all right if they speak to him, and I think it is on account of his being lame.

"They have made me so mad that I never notice him, and he has sent me a letter asking what is the trouble, and he has also asked my brother. Will you advise me what to do? I hear he is coming to the house to find out the trouble. I am a very good-looking girl, and so is the young man, and some people say that the girls are jealous of us. GLADYS."

We cannot see that your boy friend, as a young man of sixteen should be called, has done anything to offend you, and we think you must be very weak to let the mischievous talk of your girl companions cause you to ill-treat him. You are entirely too young to be "deeply in love" with any one, and we would advise you to try and turn your attention towards your studies entirely. Try to choose for your companions both boys and girls who are not silly mischief-makers, and always remember that even little girls are known by the company they keep.

"Last summer I met a young gentleman who works at one of the theatres. He asked me if I did not want to go to see the show that was there that week. As I live in Attleboro, but work in Providence, I could not go home after the show, so I told him I could not go on that account. He said, 'Why, if that is all that prevents you from going, I guess we can fix that.' I could not imagine what he was going to say. I asked him 'how?' He answered, 'My mother has a spare room, so you can come home with me if your folks are willing.' I went home and told mother everything he said. She said she did not think I had better, for other folks that did not know he lived at home would talk even if no harm was done. I was very angry and cried when I saw him. I told him all my mother had said. He did not seem to be angry at all. He said that my mother knew best, and he would not be the fellow to cast the least blur on a girl's character. Therefore, I did not go. Do you think it would have done any harm? AUDREY."

We think your mother was wise, and that the young man is a very sensible fellow. A girl cannot be too careful about her reputation, and a trifle like that, if misunderstood by vicious people, might blast your character forever. Always remember that you are surrounded by people who really enjoy gossiping about you, and who do not hesitate to slander you if they can possibly do so. Many a pure girl has been traduced by this class of persons, and, therefore, a girl must always be on the lookout to shun the appearance of evil. When you are older and your character is better established among your acquaintances you may be able to act a little more independently.

"I am seventeen years old and have a good position. I go out nearly every evening to a friend's house to see the fellows. They are all right, and I love them. My mother says I have got to stay in the house evenings or get out altogether. What shall I do about it?

"CELIA B."

We do not blame your mother for being a little angry with your foolish behavior, but why does she not lock you in your room at sundown every night? That is what we should be tempted to do if we had such a silly daughter. It does not seem possible that a girl of your age can be satisfied with the life you are leading. An occasional evening with companions of your age would be all right, but have you no work to do, no books to read, nothing to fill up your evenings more profitably than "gadding?" Mind your mother, Celia, and in later years you'll thank her for restraining you.

"I have been going with a young man for a few months past, and I thought we cared a great deal for each other. My girl friend is going with another young man. About a month ago she said something that got Frank and me quarreling. She did it unintentionally. I found out afterwards that it was all my fault, and I told him so. He has taken me to places since then, and I thought it had passed over and that we would be the same good friends again, but he is very cool towards me and does not seem like the same fel

low. Please tell me how I can win baek his love, as I love him dearly, and if his eoolness eontinues it will break my heart. I have done my best to make up with him. VIOLET S."

If you feel that you have done all that is possible to remedy your error we would advise you to stop worrying about it. No doubt the eoolness which you speak of will melt away in time, but some natures take longer to forgive and forget than others. We eannot help criticising the letter whieh you sent us, but only for your own good. Why not give less thought to the young men for a time, Violet, and try to improve your handwriting and grammar?

"I have been reading 'My Queen' and seeing so many turn to you for adviee, I also want to ask you a question. I am a girl of seventeen and have been keeping eompany with a fellow aged twenty. Of late he only eomes to see me onee a week, sometimes not for two or three weeks. I often meet him on the street when out with my girl friends, and he always speaks to me. Do you think he still eares for me? I do not feel as though I could give him up. Hoping to hear what you advise through the eolumns of 'My Queen,' I remain, Yours truly,

"LOUISE D."

The young man's actions do not seem to indieate any marked affeetion. When a man stops writing the regular weekly letters and refrains from making the regular daily or weekly ealls, it is a pretty sure sign that his devotion is waning. We would advise you to interest yourself in some one or something else, so that if you find yourself negleeted entirely you will be able to bear it bravely. Above all things, do not let him or any one else see how his eoldness hurts you, for, unfortunately, the world at large has very little sympathy for negleeted sweethearts and unrequited affeetions.

"As I am going with a young man and live in a hotel I eannot ask him up to see me unless I ask him into a bed-room. Do you think it would be wrong to ask him up there? I like this young man very mueh. Of eourse, my mother would be in the next room if not in the same, but you know young people do not want their parents in the same room with them all the time. I have not asked him up to see me yet, though I have been going around with him all summer. Will he think it funny that I do not ask him up? I have been to my friend's houses with him. Kindly advise me and greatly oblige an admirer.

"MAZIE B."

We are not prepared to say what the young man thinks regarding your failure to invite him into your bed-room, but we think it would be exeeedingly improper for you to do so, especially as you are the kind of a girl who "does not always want her parents in the room with her." When your mother thinks you are old enough and wise enough to reeeive ealls from young men she will, no doubt, provide a sitting-room for you to reeeive them in. It would be a sensible thing for you to eonsult with her upon this subjeet and be guided by her advice in regard to spending so mueh time "going" with this young man.

"Will you kindly give me your adviee on a matter of great importance to me? I am a young man, or a boy, seventeen years old, five feet nine inehes in height, weigh 165 pounds. And I am in love with a girl who is fifteen years old. But she is as well developed as most young ladies at eighteen. She is an orphan. Her mother has been dead about a month. She has a house all furnished. And I am making eighteen dollars per week. She will do as I say. Do you think it advisable to marry so young and so soon after her mother's death? She wants some one to take eare of her. Why not me as well as some one else who would take her home from her to pay them for their trouble? Please advise me as I do not know what to do. I love her as mueh as it is possible for a person to love another. And she loves me. ANXIOUS."

The condition of the young girl you write of is exeeedingly pitiful. Has she no guardian or no relatives to look after her interests? We do not think any girl of fifteen or any boy of eighteen is old enough to marry. There must be some one to proteet the girl! It would be a dreadful eondition of affairs were she obliged to marry at that age in order to be proteeted. We should be pleased to hear from the girl herself, as her side of the story would have to be eonsidered. We have no doubt that your intentions are honorable, but it ean do no harm to wait a little, for if the girl really loves you, she will not marry any one else at present.

"As I was eoming from my friend's house early one morning a very nice-looking man who talked very niee eame up to me and said a few words about the weather. Then he asked me if I, with a few girl friends, would sit for him until he took our pietures. He asked me if I with one friend would eome up to his room some night. He said his friend would take my friend's pieture. He said he was stopping at a very niee house. He said he wanted the pictures to put in some monthly papers. He then asked me if I objeeted to having my pictures taken low neek. I said I did not, for I had my picture taken once with my eollar off. He then said have you any objeetion to having them taken in a dress above your knees? I said 'no,' for I only wear them below my shoetops. Then I left him. When I was going he said, 'Don't forget to eome up to the house next Thursday night, we will be all ready for you.' I was very mueh frightened. Did I do right in not going Thursday night? A eouple of girl friends of mine said I was foolish not to go and have a good time. Do you think so? Did he mean any harm? I would like to have my pieture in the paper, but I would not want to have to do wrong for it. HOPE L."

We would advise you to give the name of that man who spoke to you to the police at once, or else tell what you have told us to your father or big brother. You were very sensible to stop talking to the fellow when you did, but, as he was a stranger to you, you should not have entered into any eonversation with him in the first plaee. There is no doubt in the world that

the fellow is a villain and one of the very worst type, as he is a foe to the young and innocent. We would advise you to drop the acquaintance of those girls who told you you were foolish not to go to his room. They must be very wicked girls or else very silly.

"I am very much worried, and want to ask you this question: I am a young lady of twenty years, and am taking the leading part in Alexander Dumas' 'Camille.' The young man with whom I take part appears very loving while on the stage. I think everything of him, and my life is wrapped up in his, but, of course, do not let him see my love for him if I can help it, and I really do fight against it, but I love him so much. After I have left the dressing-room at the close of the play he very seldom accompanies me to my boarding place. And when he does, treats me simply as a friend. I would do anything to win his love. Cannot you advise me? I read your papers each week, and will look anxiously for your reply."

We think you are a very wise young woman not to show your love. Let Cupid alone and he will, no doubt, awaken a kindred feeling in the young man's heart, and then you will enjoy his spontaneous offering of affection. It is possible the young man does not know his own feelings, and, while he is studying his heart, you can be studying him, but do not let the glamor of the stage influence you! Always remember that a "stage lover" and a real lover are two different creatures, and that it is said the two go rarely together. We shall be pleased to hear from you again, but at present can only advise you to wait and be patient.

"I am a very interested reader of your journal, 'My Queen,' so much so indeed that I can hardly wait for each week to come around. Now, I would like your opinion on the following subject. A year ago last summer a lady friend of mine gave me an introduction to a fellow in Vermont, it was while I was there on my vacation. He treated me as a gentleman should during my three weeks' stay, and on my return home asked if he might correspond with me. I consented, and we did correspond. He has called on me a number of times since. Recently I asked a lady friend about him, and she told me not to have any confidence in him as she had heard that he used to flirt with a number of girls. She doesn't like this gentleman, so I thought that was why she said it, but when she told me I refrained from writing.

"Now, did I do right in believing my lady friend, or would it be proper for me to answer him, as he wrote and asked me why I stopped writing. Will I tell him why? Please advise one in trouble. ANNIE C."

As your "lady friend's" information was merely hearsay we would advise you to pay no attention to it. Always judge people by what you see of their conduct rather than by what you hear. I should not tell the young man why I stopped writing, for he may think your friendship is not worth having if you are so easily influenced by the idle tales of others. If your regard for him is sincere why not resume the correspondence and study his character for yourself. It will not take you very long to determine his feelings for you, and it will be time enough to drop his acquaintance when you have seen something in him to disapprove of. Many a genuine love match has been broken up by some well-meaning friend repeating an item of idle gossip.

"In reading No. 2 of 'My Queen' I noticed your advice to young ladies, and therefore write to you for advice. I have been in love with a nice young man for about a year, and until recently he returned my affection, but lately he merely speaks to me. How can I regain his affection?

"Now, there is another young man who is after me, but I do not care as much for him as for the other one. What would you advise me to do?

"A. B. C. D."

Possibly the young man whom you love has been influenced by some one, and it would be well for you to ask him if you have offended him in any way. This can be done without any loss of dignity and may be the means of bringing about an explanation and reconciliation. If he refuses to explain, you can rest assured that his love has grown cold, and in that case you can congratulate yourself that it happened before it was too late, and then you can force yourself, through self-respect, to conquer your love for him. Why not try to like the other fellow and watch the result on the loved one? It may have the effect of re-awakening his affection.

"There is a young gentleman whom I have been going around with for a long time, to parties, dances, theatres, and so on. He is always affectionate when with me and seems to prefer my company to others, but he has never asked me to keep steady company with him. Would you, under the circumstances, consider yourself going with him? Will you kindly tell me what you think? I enjoy 'My Queen' very much.

"LILLIAN."

You certainly seem to be "going" with the young man, and pretty steadily, at that. Possibly the young man does not see the necessity for asking any questions as, no doubt, you evince the greatest willingness to "go" with him "steady." Some things, especially affairs of the heart, are understood without words, and it is probable that the young man has judged your state of mind by your actions. Perhaps, if you held back a little or even disappointed him once or twice, he would see the advisability of asking the question. It is an experiment that we are sure would be worth trying.

"I read 'My Queen' with great interest, for Marion Marlowe's early life was so similar to my own. I was born and brought up in a small village in Western Pennsylvania, and up to a year ago we had a comfortable home. My parents both died suddenly, and I found myself thrown on the world. I could get no employment at home so came to Pittsburg, but could get nothing that would provide a respectable living, so was forced to accept a position as chambermaid in

one of the best hotels, where at least I have a comfortable home. I have a fair education and believe if I had a chance I could make my way in the world. Do you think I could improve my position by coming to the city of New York. I am twenty years of age. I shall look anxiously for your advice in your magazine. Yours truly,

"MINEWAH G."

We are sorry, indeed, that you are forced to take so uncongenial a position, but, while you are doing your duty faithfully as a chambermaid, can you not find some time to continue your education? You might take music lessons, for instance, if you have any talent that way, or spend your leisure hours learning shorthand or the typewriter. A bright girl has so many chances that a dull girl has not, yet we do not advise you to come to this city, as it is already overcrowded with bright young women. We should think in the city of Pittsburg you might find something to do that would be more suitable to your taste, but would not advise you to "let go of one rope until you have hold of another."

"This is also a question of love, but not like those letters you have been receiving, for I am too young to think of a lover yet. I am thirteen years old and will graduate from public school next June. I had a girl friend. She has been my friend since I was six years old. Not long ago there was a quarrel between her father and mother, and she went to San Francisco with her mother. Not long ago she came back to visit her father and would not speak to me, and now she has gone away from me. What shall I do, Miss Shirley, for I loved her so well? ALICE."

Poor little Alice! We are very glad to hear from you and we sympathize deeply with your sorrow. But do not grieve, little one, over your friend's coldness. She is only a child, and probably not nearly so wise or so affectionate as yourself. Always think of her kindly and some day, no doubt, she will be ashamed of her actions, and be glad to have your love. Meanwhile, we are sure there are lots of other nice girls that you can be happy with, and we certainly advise you to cultivate their acquaintance.

"For the last three months I have been bothered with a very perplexing question, and I feel as though you, dear Miss Shirley, could help me. Last summer while visiting my sister, I met a very handsome young man who paid me a great deal of attention. When I first came home I received two letters a week. Now I receive one a month. I cannot give him up, for I love him dearly. He has quit keeping regular company, and my friends at his home say he talks of me constantly. What shall I do, my dear friend? Has he gotten tired of me? He is a book-keeper in a large establishment, yet he writes me that he has no work to do at night. Please advise me, and I will do exactly as you say. I go with papa in a trip through South America in three weeks, so will you please publish my answer before that time, if possible, because I am greatly troubled?

"JEAN."

We should judge from your letter that the young man was only trying to make up his mind, and should advise you not to hurry him or worry him. Let him solve the mystery of love for himself; then, if he comes to you with an avowal of affection, it will be all the sweeter because it has not been forced. We presume you are young enough to let the question of love rest for a time, and who knows but that you will see some one whom you love better before you are through with your travels?

"I thought I would confide in you. I am sixteen years of age, and am supposed by my parents to be a very good, obedient girl, but there are five young men who like me very much, and I return their love. My mother does not dream of anything of that sort. Now, I like one young man the best, but he is peculiar, and we have never conversed much at all. Please advise me what to do to win his affection. J. J."

Your letter is so shocking we hardly know how to answer it! You have five lovers now and are angling for another—and you are only sixteen years of age! We should very much like to have the name of your mother so that we could write her a letter and tell her what we think of mothers who do not watch their young daughters. Do you realize, child, what the end will be? Don't you know that you will be disgraced for life if you go on that way, deceiving your mother and injuring your own character? We wish it were possible to see and talk with you, as you are certainly standing in a most dangerous position, but, as we cannot do this, we implore you to drop the acquaintance of these young men at once and in future be a good girl—one whom every one will be proud of!

"I am a young married man and I am so disgusted with life that I write to you to answer a question for me. Why should I or any man work all day to support a woman who is perfectly well able to work and, at least, help to support herself? My wife has absolutely nothing to do but take care of the flat, tend to our one baby and get three meals a day, while I have to work eight hours a day at a lathe, which is very hard work. My wife knows how to do dressmaking beautifully and could earn a great deal of money if she tried. Don't you think that she ought to do it?

"SAM S."

Your letter proves you to be a very hard-hearted man and a thoroughly undeserving husband. It is a pity your wife ever married you if she was so capable of earning her own living, and we presume she has regretted her folly a thousand times over. How would you like to exchange places with your wife for a month? How would you enjoy caring for the baby, cooking three meals day, sweeping, cleaning, washing dishes, mending, and above all, trying to make a pleasant home for such a cold-blooded husband? When your wife has fulfilled the duties of wife, mother, housekeeper, laundress and "general utility" woman for you the least you could do would be to appreciate her

"I have been engaged for two years and love my fiance enough to want to be married just as soon as we possibly can. His salary is not very large, and I will be obliged to do my own work, etc. I have always been used to having servants in my father's house, and I am wondering whether I had better wait until my fiance is able to afford one or to marry now. Do you think doing housework will affect my love for him?

"EVA O. P."

We have known a great many women who loved their husbands very dearly, and who were glad to do any work they could to render his home happy and comfortable. We all of us dislike to give up any luxury to which we have grown accustomed, but if you really love your fiance you will gladly give up everything of this sort for the sake of his society. If he is the right sort of a man he will appreciate your sacrifice and make it just as easy for you as he can.

Your own feelings must be your guide in this matter. If you love the servants more than you do him, why postpone your marriage by all means. If your love for him is as complete as it should be you will gladly give up many things for his sake.

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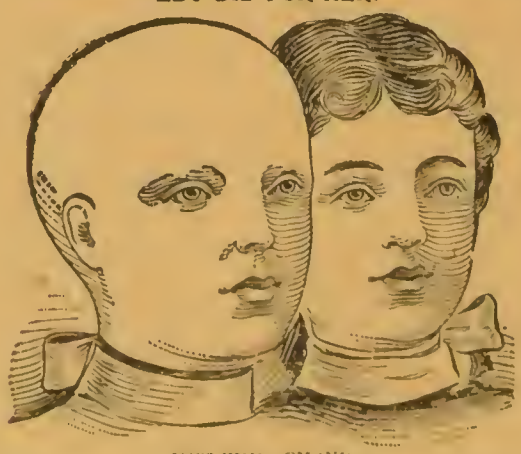

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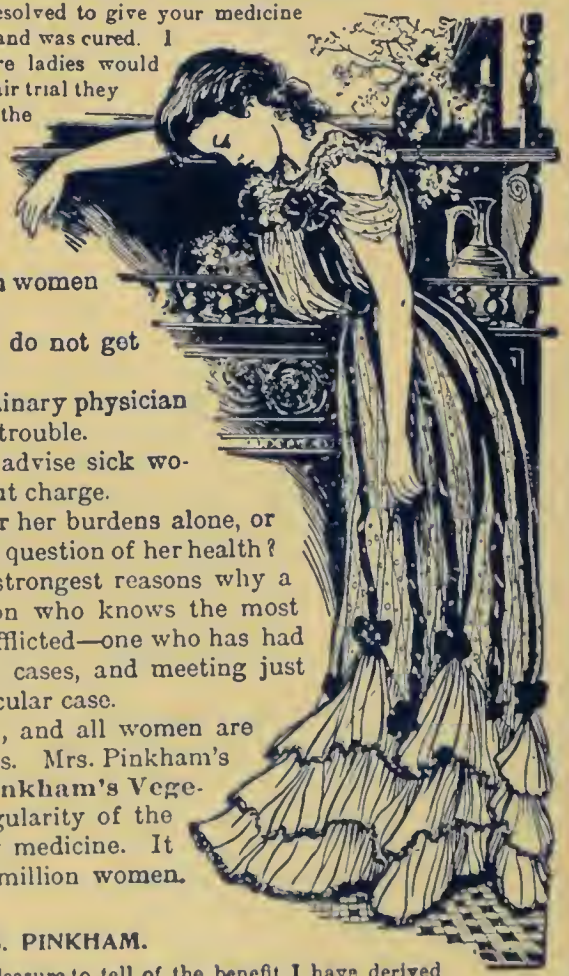

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